



U.S. House of Representatives Committee on the Judiciary F. James Sensenbrenner, Jr., Chairman

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News Advisory

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Contact: Jeff Lungren/Terry Shawn
202-225-2492

Oversight Hearing Thursday on Need for Implementing 9/11 Commission's Call for Better Security for Travel in Western Hemisphere

What: Oversight Hearing titled, "The Need to Implement WHTI to Protect U.S. Homeland Security"
Who: Subcommittee on Immigration, Border Security and Claims - Rep. John N. Hostettler (R-Ind.), Chairman
When: 11:30 a.m., Thursday, June 8, 2006
Where: 2141 Rayburn Building

The 9/11 Commission Report states, "Americans should not be exempt from carrying biometric passports or otherwise enabling their identities to be securely verified when they enter the United States; nor should Canadians or Mexicans. . . . The current system enables non-U.S. citizens to gain entry by showing minimal identification. The 9/11 experience shows that terrorists study and exploit America's vulnerabilities." [page 388]

BACKGROUND

- ✓ The 2004 Intelligence Reform and Terrorism Prevention Act requires better document security standards for U.S. travel within the Western Hemisphere by eliminating the so-called "Western Hemisphere Exemption" that currently allows travel to and from the U.S. within the Western Hemisphere without needing a passport. The Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative (WHTI) will require all travelers within the Western Hemisphere to have a passport or other accepted document that establishes the bearer's identity and nationality to enter or re-enter the U.S.
- ✓ Currently U.S. citizens returning from Canada, Mexico, the Caribbean, Bermuda and Central and South America are able to enter the U.S. by providing proof of nationality, such as a birth certificate, and government-issued photo ID, such as a driver's license.
- ✓ These documents are much easier to forge and use for criminal purposes. D.C. sniper John Allen Muhammed made a living on Antigua as a trafficker in forged documents and as a human smuggler to the U.S. before beginning his murderous rampage in the D.C. area.

THIS HEARING WILL EXAMINE...

- ✓ Will DHS meet the January 2008 deadline to implement the WHTI?
- ✓ If not, what are the security impacts, especially in light of last week's arrest of 17 home-grown Canadian Muslim terrorists inspired by Al-Qaeda? Until WHTI is implemented, Canadians like those arrested for terrorism can travel freely back and forth across the Northern Border, subject only to an oral declaration of citizenship and an occasional driver's license verification by U.S. border inspectors.

WITNESSES: Mr. Paul Rosenzweig, Acting Assistant Secretary for Policy at the Department of Homeland Security; Ms. Janis Kephart, former 9/11 Commission staff member and author; Mr. David B. Harris, Director of the International and Terrorist Intelligence Program at INSIGNIS, Ottawa, Canada; and Mr. Roger Dow, President and CEO of the Travel Industry Association of America (TIA).

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